

*Science Fiction, Fantasy and Anime Society*

# *THE ZINE*

*Issue 8*

# *A message from the editor:*

Greetings, this is your editor speaking!

Welcome, welcome all to a new year of fun and games of the Science fiction, Fantasy and Anime society. I welcome you all to this humble platform where we share our secret creations to a part of a world.

This edition is my very first Zine edition. As a successor of the last one (who made the Zine rather brilliant I must say), I do feel the stress in continuing the legacy. So, due to my overwhelming ego, I tried to perfect my first edition and ended up pushing my deadlines dreadfully \*bows apologetically\*

Anyhow, I really didn't regret taking up this job. Editing was great! It boosted the last of my creative juice in art and believe me, I have never been so proud of what I've made :D

A word before I sign off: I do hope every piece of art and literature will be treated with respect. As someone who also writes or just creating stuff in general, I would want my audience, be you liking my work or not, to respect my things. We are all familiar with the concept if you want to be treated in a certain way, treat others the same way.

So now sit back, grab a cup of tea, and enjoy the journey by pen and paper~

*So you may ask...*

## WHO IS OUR COMMITTEE EXACTLY?!

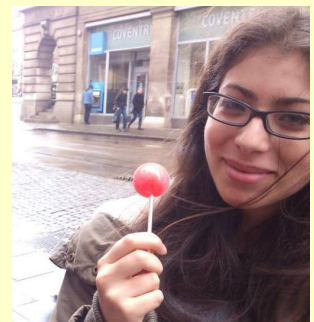
President: Mike Begg



Having been Anime Rep last year, Mike is an otaku above all else. Unfortunately he now has to devote his time to keeping the society running and occasionally doing some physics rather than spending all of it watching anime. A shame. If you ever have questions about the society or just want to chat about nerdy things then feel free to talk to Mike!

Treasurer: Natasha Williams

Natasha ran for the position of treasurer because she likes to feel both important and rich. Unfortunately, given that the money is actually carefully monitored, she is no richer than she was at the start of the year. When she isn't chasing people up demanding payment, she's watching Star Trek, listening to Kesha, or making terrible puns about Marxism. The most common words out of her mouth are "Hey, do you know your wifi password?" Occasionally she actually goes to her History and Politics lectures.



Sci-fi Rep: Nel Taylor



Nel spells her name with one L rather than the two most other people seem to like. She likes to spend half of her free time dressing in odd clothing and running around in a field, and the other half watching geeky TV and films. If she had to pick one fantasy world to go live in, it would probably be Middle Earth. However, until such times as her prowess as a wizard is called upon (and Gods help us if that ever happens), she is studying to be the Master of Neuroscience.



## Anime Rep: Mike Barnfield

As the second Mike, my job is to run the Monday night sessions. I enjoy anime (or else I'd be underqualified) and am a self-proclaimed music nerd. For almost everything I appreciate the very good, the very bad and not much else in between.



## Social Secretary: Gary Fisher



After defeating my bitter rival 'Re-Open Nominations' by a narrow landslide i stormed into office as Social Secretary with as much pomp and circumstance as was appropriate. Since coming into office my main policies have been attempting to convince the President that Due South and Sharpe are technically Science Fiction so thus can watched during our Wednesday sessions, i have also occasionally organised some socials in between these heated debates about the sci-fi elements of an obscure Canadian cop show from the 90's which me and maybe 2 other people have actually heard of let alone watched."

## Communications Officer: Tang Ka Wing

Goes by the name Tangka, she constantly questions her current existence as a normal university student instead of being a rogue samurai in the Edo Period or a sorcerer in the Middle Ages. In the end, the conclusion would be she is the real world Tamaki Suou from Ouran High School Host Club. She is from the distant land of Hong Kong (and not China) and is the master of this magazine and also the awesome person behind the library books and emails. For your information, she is currently (forever will be) obsessed with Anime and Kpop and she is not short!



## M.A.S.C.O.T.: James Titmuss



James is old. Like, really old. And we can't seem to get rid of him. So we just let him sit around and blabber about whatever he likes. As MASCOT his is responsible for remembering what happened before, so is advanced (mid-twenties) age helps him there. He fancies himself as the one behind the scenes pulling the strings. We don't contradict his delusions for fear of what might happen to his already limited sanity

Onwards, my fellow  
soldiers, to the land of  
words and awesomeness...



**TITLE: A MISUNDERSTANDING**

**AUTHOR: LUKE PIECHOWSKI**

[HTTP://WWW.WATTPAD.COM/STORY/8392478-THE-BARD%27S-TALES-THE-TAVERN](http://www.wattpad.com/story/8392478-the-bard%27s-ales-the-tavern)

A misunderstanding.

That's what all of this was.

A great, big, slightly illegal misunderstanding.

Or at least, that's what our hero, Petnak Shieldheart, thought as the prison cart trundled along the dirt road. He rubbed the shackles with a calloused hand, looking out of the iron bars to the rolling landscape in front of him. The sun had just started to fade, dipping below a verdant hill, spilling shades of orange, red and yellow across it's surface.

And as I travel now,

and shall do for a while,

across hills and valley's tipped with orange

I can't help crack a smile,

for I-

He frowned. For I-

Dammit! What word rhymes with orange? He thought, scrounging through his cluttered memories. He gave up, swiftly remembered that there was no word that rhymed, at least in the common tongue, and sank back against the bars. The cold metal piercing his azure blue shirt and waistcoat. 'Crows peck out your eyes Petnak.' He said to anyone who was listening, 'You're a bard, writing poems is what you do! What use is a barbarian without his sword, a wizard without his books, A-'

'Shut up in there!' His mounted escort barked, spitting cheese and the smell of cheap wine into the cage. 'It's hardly my fault.' Petnak replied indignantly, 'This damn thing is restricting my creativity, how am I supposed to work on my craft?' Petnak had already tried the being nice card, it hadn't worked, and now, since he was unable to do anything else, he had decided to act the part of the picky child or spoiled nobleman.

The guard scoffed and urged his horse forward, out of Petnak's line of sight. 'Hey!' He called, 'Get back here, I have valid complaints! I have rights!' He pressed his face against the bars, shaking them in protest. He was sitting on a square block of wood, surrounded on all sides by cold iron bars. If he stood, he had to stoop or bend at the knees, to avoid pressing his head against the matching wooden roof. This cell was in turn drawn by one man on a horse, along with two mounted escorts.

He glanced out the bars again, as a chill wind cut across him, the late Autumn evenings he loved, were always better when viewed with a roaring fire by the hands. His second mounted escort still rode in position, a young human male, couldn't be much older than him, with dark brown hair and matching eyes. His expression, one of casual disinterest, and he looked right at home in his armour. He was the one carrying Petnak's books and gear, and he hadn't treated it in the manner it deserved. Petnak leaned back again, 'You agree with me don't you?'

The guard looked towards him for a moment, before once again eyeing the horizon, 'About what?'

About how I have rights.'

'You're a criminal. You're lucky you still have hands.'

'I'm just saying if I'm going to be arrested under false charges, the least they could do is provide a cushion.'

The guard snorted, smothering the sound with a coughing fit, but Petnak could spot the remnants of a smile when he had lowered his gloved hand. 'I really shouldn't be talking to you, the count wants your head on a platter.' Petnak shrugged and looked away, 'For what? Assaulting his pig-headed son?'

'The story goes that you nearly gutted the man, yelling something about a glorious revolution...'

Petnak raised a light brown eyebrow, 'hm, that's a new part.' He looked away again, back towards the steadily sinking sun, 'Besides, they take me to trial, I'll tell my story, the court wizard will see that I only speak the truth and I finally get out of these.' He held up his hands to demonstrate his point, heavy iron shackles, engraved with a large purple gem to prevent any magic casting, held his wrists in a vice like grip, a chain keeping them close together. 'Truthfully, all of this.' he said gesturing around, 'is just a formality. He'll likely just have me killed and make it look like an accident.'

He said it with such a casual air, that the words hit the guard like a physical blow. He glanced forward, making sure he wasn't being watched, and then nudged his horse closer to the cage, 'So..' He asked in a hushed voice, 'What really happened?'



## **TITLE: THE TIGER AND THE CRANE**

**AUTHOR: LAURA BEACH**

In a small rural town, the usual calm had been replaced instead by noisy crowds.

“Bloody market day!” a young man groaned, stretching his aching muscles as he leaned on the pile of crates he had just finished moving. It was an arduous job and didn’t pay well but he had no choice the way the kingdom was at the moment. Looking at the happy gathering of shoppers, no one would think war could be just around the corner...

“Is that the last of it?” crowed the shopkeeper.

“Yeah that’s all of it old man.” The younger replied.

“OLD MAN? Show some respect you lazy bum!”

The younger just chuckled. The old shopkeeper had been like a second father to him, hell practically his true father ever since he was dumped on the old farts doorstep as a baby. They always jibed at each other this way. Sometimes all an outcast needs is another to share their burden.

The old shopkeeper was so cynical and unpleasant to others he didn’t have a friend in the world. Those he did have either passed away or eventually left. Even the younger man didn’t fit in. His appearance made sure of that. Bright red/ginger hair grown down past his shoulders with black streaks running through, startling amber eyes and strapping muscles from years of heavy lifting made him a most intimidating sight.

“Hey, need any help wrestling the money from the poor peasant’s wallets?” The younger called out jokingly.

“Just heave your carcass over to the bank and get me some more change Tora before I sell you.”

“All right, don’t get your underwear in a twist I’ll go now.” The red head replied. Still stretching he headed off into the crowd, pausing to take some notes from the older man as he passed. Tucking them into the purse on his belt he turned sideways so as not to barge people unnecessarily with his large frame.

The bank was a large stone building that took up a whole side of the small town square. It was oddly quiet inside given the activity elsewhere, but most people had probably already drawn out any money they needed. The clerk refused to take his eyes off Tora the entire time.

“Do I look like a bloody bandit?” he muttered to himself as he pushed open the doors to leave. Two women flattened themselves against the iron railings on the side of the steps to let him pass, despite the fact that there was a good two feet of space between them.

*Great, now I terrify the local women.* He thought grimly. There was no reason for people to act this way. He had never been violent unless attacked first, and even then he only hurt his opponent enough to scare them off. It was all because of that old saying...

*Ginger hair alone is right, those with stripes will prowl at night.* He recited in his head. *Stupid superstition if you ask me, I like my beauty sleep thank you very much.*

About halfway across the square his progress was halted as the crowd stopped moving. They were all staring towards the fountain, where a royal messenger was now stood to get above the masses.

“What now?” Tora groaned. If the other kingdoms have attacked a small village again it was sure to mean war. A lot of people would die, and nobody even knows what started the attacks in the first place!

“Listen all, for an important message from your king!” the messenger began in his loud, trained voice. “The princess of Herpetia is willing to seek a peace between our two nations. If this occurs, the kingdom of Avia will most likely back down as well, ending all conflict between our three nations. The princess however, cannot travel here against her father’s wishes, and cannot make him see the path to peace. The king is offering a horse’s weight in gold to the man who brings him the princess, safe and unharmed. The princess is aware of this plan, but she will resist capture so as not to reveal the plot to her father. This undertaking is not for the faint of heart, as if caught, the likely punishment is death. Your king urges you to think carefully before assisting him in this venture, but should you decide to undertake this quest and succeed, you will be well rewarded. That is all.”

*A horse’s weight in gold huh? Tora chuckled as he pondered, his chin resting on his fist in his usual thinking pose. How hard can it be? I could do with the money. I could help the old fool update the shop as well. The princess shouldn’t be any problem; most women are half my size for God’s sake! I’ll just scoop her up, gag her and disappear into the forest. Yeah, that will work...*

Walking quickly through the hustle, he found his way back to the shop, where the old man had just finished selling a young couple some cookware for their new home.

“I brought you your change old timer.” He called in greeting.

“Must you always address me so with that ear to ear grin of yours? I told you, call me Jasper.”

“Right o’ pops, now listen. The king wants someone to go bring him the princess from over yonder, and he will pay a horse’s weight in gold to the man who gets the job done. As I have just dealt with the deliveries for the week, I was thinking maybe I could give it a shot. I scare more customers off than I bring in anyways...”

“Absolutely not! Bloody youngsters these days. How will an old man like me keep the shop running if you go and get your head cut off hmm?”

*“You’ll be fine. Just get a new guy and pay him the crappy wage you’re paying me and all will be fine.”*

“CRAPPY WAGE! Give a boy a roof over his head, clothes on his back, food on his bloody table and how does he repay you...”

“Look, you know I can barely pay for my own food! I appreciate you giving me the chance to manage my own money instead of having you doing everything for me, but things have got to change! The building is starting to fall down, the shop front looks a mess... If this carries on we won’t have any customers at all. They won’t walk in for fear of the shop itself collapsing on them!”

“And how do you plan on performing this miracle of yours? This isn’t a fairy tale boy. There will be trained guards, with swords and bows! You are nothing but a shop hand. You don’t even have a chance.”

Tora sighed and shuffled his feet in frustration. *Gosh he’s a stubborn old fart!*

“At least let me take a look. You taught me how to track and stalk game in the woods so I can sneak around well enough. The whole point is to get in and out without the guards even knowing I’m there. No fight, no danger. I’ll be back in the kingdom by the following dawn with a good horse.”

“Fine, go! See how I care! We don’t have a horse and I am not lending you the money either. Your plan, you pay for it. If you make it back in one piece with the gold, I will personally throw you a welcome feast, and hand the whole shop over to you. Come back with nothing and you get hard labour for a month! I’ll send you down the docks all the extra hours God sends. That will end our money worries.”

“Yeah and kill me in the process, nice one. I accept your deal but I don’t want the shop. You keep it, it’s your life’s work and you would die of worry if I ran the place. That welcome feast better be good, and all I can eat too!” Tora yelled as he ran for the door sporting his trademark grin.

“There ain’t enough food in the whole kingdom for that you greedy lout!” Jasper yelled back, turning around so that the younger wouldn’t see the gentle smile on his face. *He’s just like me when I was young, hot headed and stupid.* “Good luck you daft sod.” He muttered to himself.

Tora was already on his way to the local stables. He couldn't afford to rent a horse there, but he could afford to after. The shop sometimes gave credit to trustworthy folks, why not the stables?

"Ouch! Unruly bastards..." he cursed to himself 15 minutes later as he landed unceremoniously on his rear, having been thrown out of the stables for his audacity. "They could've just asked me to leave politely."

Sitting himself down on the verge a little further down the road (lest he be moved on again), he folded immediately into his thinking pose (despite not even knowing he has a thinking pose). *What do I do now? I can't go without a horse...*

*As he leaned back on the post and rail fencing, he realised there wasn't a single soul outside. Probably all in town, it is market day after all. In the field behind him, a fine chestnut mare was grazing. She was probably a cross between a workhorse and one of those fancy horses. She was perfectly proportioned with big strong hindquarters for power and speed, a good well muscled sloping shoulder for an easy gait, well sprung barrel for heart and lung room well arched muscular neck and an attractive head.*

"Hellooo darling." Tora crooned. *This mare is just what he needs. He could pay the stables for her use later, after all, isn't peace more important than a little money? Who needs a saddle and bridle? He smirked to himself. Well hopefully she doesn't or this will end rather badly...*

*Cautiously he approached, keeping an eye out for any passers by or any stable staff. The mare raised her head and began walking towards him, nostrils flaring in curiosity.*

*"There, have a good sniff, there's a good girl." Tora whispered as the mare took him in. She seems the friendly sort...*

*Removing his bag from his shoulder, he gently rested it on the mares back. She bent round and began to nibble on the strap.*

*"Oh no, that's my food in there." He chuckled as he slung the bag back over his shoulder. She certainly seems broke. Even if she wasn't, he had ridden his fair share of fractious mounts over the years on errands for the shop. He should be able to handle this.*

*Gently he eased his way up on to her back, first leaning over resting on his waist, then gently moving his leg round until he was sat astride her.*

*"Well that was easy." He remarked offhandedly. "Now, on you go girl."*

To be continued in next issue...



**TITLE: FICTIONALITY**

**AUTHOR: JONTY LEVINE**

Daniel stared at the book in his hands with disbelief. This book was a complete violation of logic for one reason: no one had ever heard of it, not in his family, his school, or even the Internet. And that was such a shame, because it was the best thing Daniel had ever read in his life.

For him, *Hole in the Skies* was more than just a story of a young girl with a legendary power that appeared once per generation. It was such a perfect blend of fantasy and reality, that Daniel had a hard time believing parts of it weren't in fact real. He had been disappointed when he finished it of course, because he wanted it to go on forever.

As if to add to his confusion, it looked like a bestseller. The inside covers contained choice quotes from major newspapers, including one that said it was 'Destined to be a classic.' But Daniel knew that none of these papers had published reviews of such a book, because he'd checked the archives, twice. What's more, the front cover said it was the first part in a trilogy.

Daniel had given up searching for the missing sequels, but at this point he would have settled for finding just one other fan, someone else who had enjoyed the book as much as he did, who could verify its existence.

If there was any justice in the world, Daniel would be reading *HitS* fanfiction, looking at *HitS* fanart, attending conventions with *HitS* cosplay and talking with other fans about how the movie adaptations weren't as good as the books, because nothing could be as good as that book. There wasn't much chance of that happening either, because just like the book itself, its fans did not exist.

He turned back to the Internet, and googled the name of the book, with quotes and without, and the Author, R. O. Malone. Some band had a song called 'Hole in the Skies', and there was a Ro Malone in Baltimore, but it was clearly not the same person.

Then Daniel thought of something else. It was a silly idea, but he couldn't believe he didn't think of it earlier. He opened a new tab once again, and typed the name of the

main character:

*Ayla Starling*

It seemed there was only one person in the world with that name, as shown by the first search result:

Ayla Starling | Facebook

Daniel almost couldn't bring himself to click the blue link, in case he was wrong, in case it was someone else. For some reason, his heart was pounding. He recalled the terrible, terrible things that happened to Ayla as a teenager. But if that book began in the late nineties, he thought, she'd be about 20-something now.

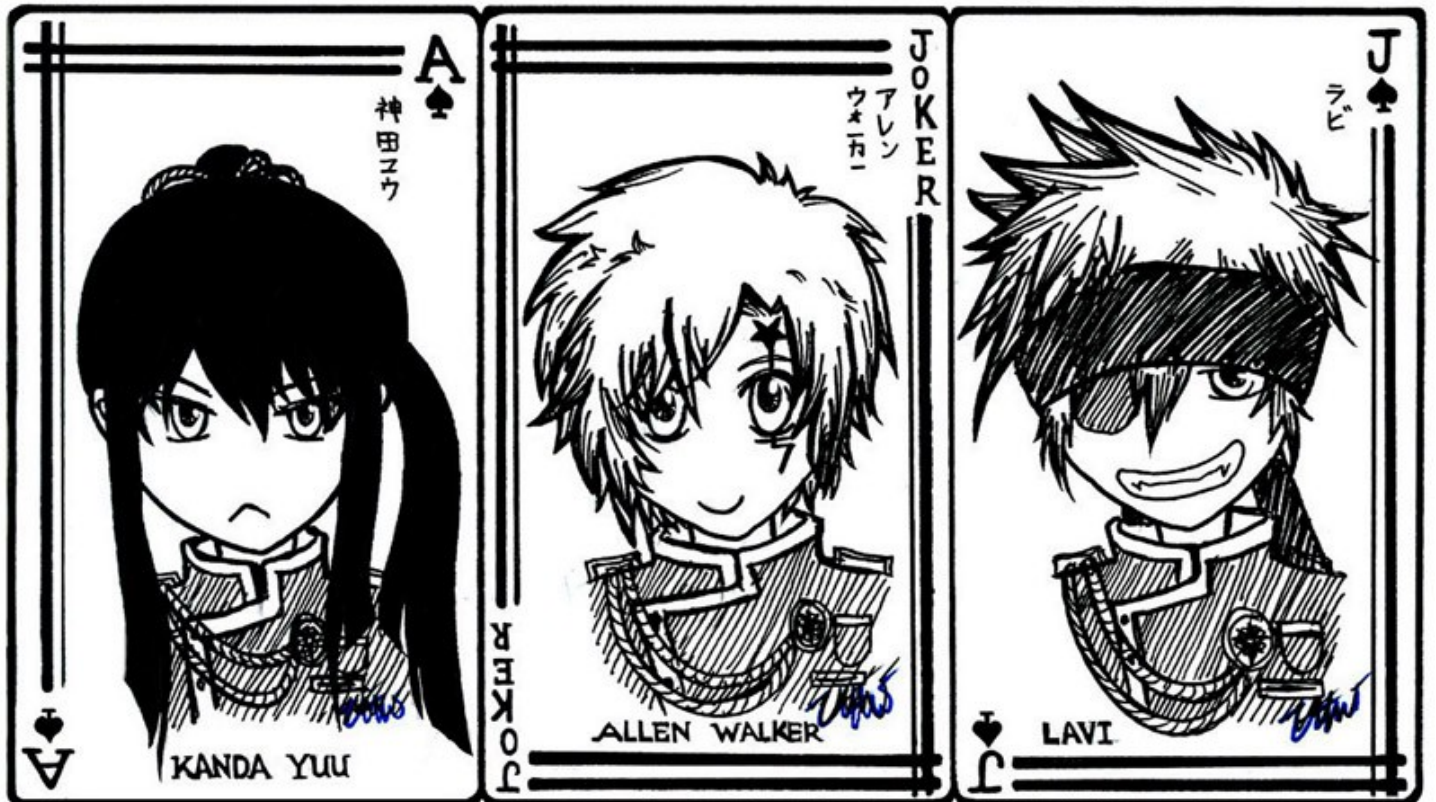
Click

It looked like the profile of an ordinary person. To his dismay, most of her personal details were not visible. It only said where she worked and went to university, and that she now lived in Cambridge. But there was a profile picture. And it looked exactly like how the book described her older self in the epilogue – the hair, the earring, the scar. There could be no doubt for Daniel that he was indeed looking at the personal webpage of his favourite fictional character, who was evidently a real person.

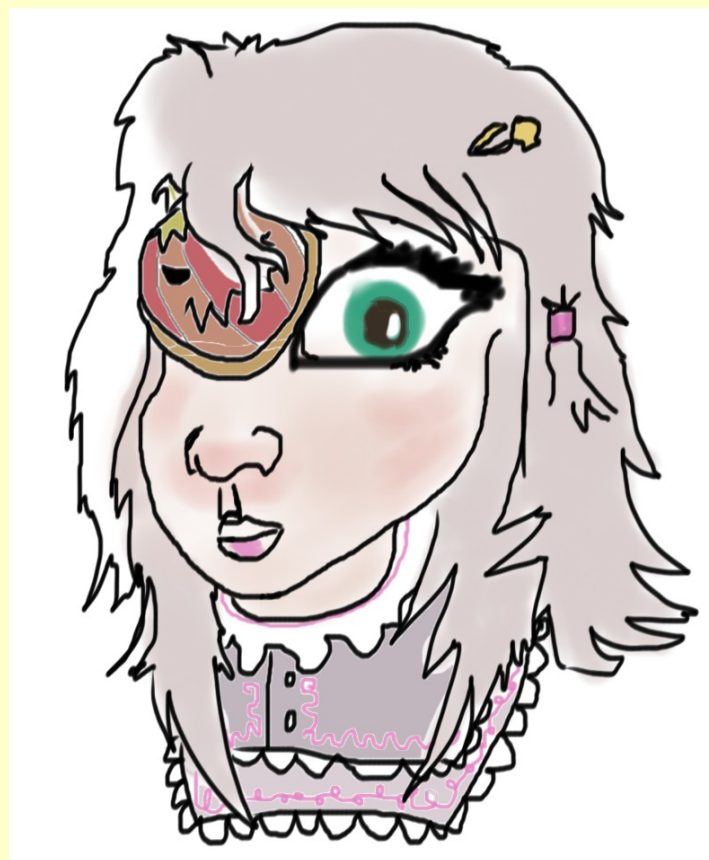
Could that mean that the events described in the book were real too? No, it had obviously been written as a work of fiction. Real life didn't sort itself into intricate plot lines the way *Hole in the Skies* did. Daniel wondered if this real life Ayla knew there were books written about her. He doubted she did, any more than a character like Harry Potter knew he was in a novel. And like the Harry Potter books, Ayla's story took place in a world that didn't contain her story. No work of fiction was supposed to contain evidence of its own fictionality. None except for the book Daniel was holding.

"Oh God," Daniel said aloud. "I've broken the fourth wall."

*We would like to interrupt  
this program to bring you  
fanarts~*



D.Gray Man by Nadya Yuris



Halloween Lolita by Matthew Carter





Severus Snape by Erin Dawe Lane



# **TITLE: WHEN THE MOON IS FULL**

## **CHAPTER: 4 – TURNING POINT**

**AUTHOR: JONTY LEVINE**

Elourhay tried to get up but his limbs just gave way under his own weight. Professor Yagami knelt on the floor beside him, the dark mist still flickering around him like a candle flame.

“Elourhay, how old are you? Answer honestly, I will tell no one else.” He whispered, bending down to make sure no one could read his lips either.

“Eighteen... nineteen in July...” Elourhay panted. Why would professor Yagami want to know his age?

The professor seemed to look even angrier than before. Grasping Elourhay’s wrist he sent a pulse of magic into the young elf.

“Aaaargh, oh great goddess that burns stop it!” Screamed Elourhay. The burning sensation he felt earlier had reappeared with the professor’s spell, only much worse. This time his veins and arteries were on fire, burning him alive from within.

“What’s wrong?” asked the headmistress, her eyes wide with concern for her student.

“He will tell you soon enough, when he wants to stop lying.” Professor Yagami answered, turning away from Elourhay leaving the elf gasping in pain as the spell subsided. “I’m surprised no one has noticed. He must be a very powerful elf to get this far so young. If you don’t mind, take him to the infirmary while I make sure that the elder two are still in one piece.”

Shuck and Luke, thanks to the professor’s intervention, had survived relatively unscathed and were dusting themselves off on the other side of the room.

“Up you get sweetheart.” The headmistress crooned as she used an arm around Elourhay’s shoulder to pull him to a sitting position. “Now what did grumpy old Kazuki mean when he said that you were lying hmm?”

“I don’t know.” He replied truthfully. “All he did was ask me my age...”

“Maybe he thinks you’re a little older than you let on dear. That shield charm of yours was a bit beyond your years, but to add a reflection spell as well? Are you sure you haven’t been getting some help from an older sibling? Or maybe you dropped out of

school somewhere else and started again here?”

“No! I’ve been home schooled a bit by my father but that’s all I swear. I’m eighteen, honestly!” Elourhay pleaded desperately, leaning back into the headmistress’ arms when the effort made him dizzy.

“Easy there, don’t over exert yourself. I’ve never seen that happen with a simple stunning spell before; you pack quite the little magical punch in there don’t ya?” she chuckled, poking the exhausted elf playfully in the chest. “Up to your feet come on, best get you checked over by the school doctor.”

“I’m fine I’ll walk on my own.” Elourhay muttered once on his feet. “You make sure everything is taken care of here. You still need to do all of your paperwork and decide who’s head of each house don’t you? The infirmary is only down the hall and to the left, I’ll be fine.”

“Well if you say so, but if I find you unconscious on the floor when I leave it’s three months worth of detention got it?”

“I’ve got it.” Elourhay chuckled as he slowly made his way to the door. Miss Baggs really needed to learn that not everyone needed a second mother figure in their lives...

Had the corridor to the infirmary been magically extended over the summer? It certainly feels that way thought Elourhay. His legs, although holding his weight, were strangely shaky and refused to move in a straight line. Nevertheless he was determined to make it to the end of the corridor, resorting to using the pale stone walls to support himself.

Nearly there he told himself. Just a little rest... he leaned against the wall, resting his forehead on his hands as he tried to stop his legs from trembling. He groaned as he heard footsteps approaching. That jaunty swinging gait could only belong to *that* vampire...

“You look like shit Ellie dearest.” Taunted that unmistakable silky voice.

“Go away Vlad I’m not in the mood...” Elourhay warned, not that it would have much effect.

“Oh dear, let’s hope that you don’t say that too often to your girlfriend, oh wait, you don’t have one...”

“Neither do you...”

“Only because none of them are what I’m looking for in a bride.” Vlad stated almost mournfully. “But enough of that, I’m curious... Do you know what professor Yagami was doing back then when he made your very blood boil?”

Elourhay froze... how could Vlad have known exactly what the burning sensation felt like? Professor Yagami wasn't into torturing students (well... usually)...

Vlad smirked as he sensed the elf tense. So he was on the right track after all. Leaning down a little to whisper into Elourhay's ear, he made sure to trap the elf against the wall.

"He was testing the magical conducting ability of your blood." He muttered softly, enjoying how the elf was getting more and more uncomfortable with their close proximity. "You should have felt a pleasant tingling, not burning. Your conduction system is still immature... you haven't 'turned' yet have you?"

Elourhay immediately turned to strike the vampire, only to end up truly pinned to the wall, both of his wrists held above his head.

"Now now calm down Ellie, I'm not going to spread it around. After all, It's awful what they do to members of your kind that never turn. What was it again?"

Permanent exile among humans, what little magic they had taken from them and no contact with their family ever again? I should think they would rather die..."

Elourhay struggled to get free, turning his head in a vain attempt to hide the tears forming in the corners of his eyes.

Vlad was right... he had never turned. Most elves 'turn', 'come into power' or magically mature around the age of fourteen. Sometimes it happens earlier, which makes the process easier but the final jump in magical power is lessened, while others like Windsong and Elourhay's father (these things tending to run in families) turn late. While those who turn late end up much more magically powerful, the process worsens with age.

Windsong had turned earlier that very year during the summer holiday at the very late age of 16, but the process had nearly killed him (Elourhay still shudders at the memory of his brothers screams). His father had turned at nearly seventeen, and ended up in a coma for two whole months...

Fewer still never turn at all... and eighteen was considered the cut-off age when those who never turned were exiled. If anyone found out...

Elourhay sobbed weakly, keeping his head down so that his fringe could hide the tears that were now flowing freely, the salty fluid stinging his cheeks. It was all over, if Vlad let slip and another pure blooded elf found out he would never see his family again.

"No need to cry Ellie. It's not like it's going to happen to you. To think you are so young and we never knew... Never mind, not long now judging by that unwanted power surge earlier." Vlad crooned, slowly slipping down so that his lips just brushed Elourhay's neck.



“What are you doing? GET OFF ME!” Elourhay cried. “And what are you talking about? I’M EIGHTEEN ALREADY YOU STUPID ASSHOLE!” he sobbed pathetically, no longer caring about how weak he looked. “Get it now? If you tell anyone... IF YOU TELL I’LL KILL YOU I SWEAR!”

Vladimir gasped. Eighteen already? That means...

“I won’t tell.” He whispered. “But all is not lost, that power surge of yours, that sort of thing only happens when you start to turn.”

“If I turn now I’m a dead elf.” Elourhay stated coldly. Some elves were recorded as turning after seventeen, not one survived. If he was turning at over eighteen he was as good as dead.

“If you’re dead then you won’t mind me doing this.” He whispered as he sank his fangs into Elourhay’s slender neck. The elf struggled violently for a few seconds before becoming limp in his arms.

*Feels good doesn’t it? He projected, Elourhay now able to hear his thoughts and vice versa. I can tell you now Ellie, not only do you taste divine but you are definitely turning. Young elves always taste so bland, older elves so rich and deep like a good wine. You’re somewhere in between, it’s a distinctive flavour I’ve only tasted once before, and that elf turned three days later...*

Vladimir, drinking blood from live victims on school grounds is forbidden! They’ll never make you head prefect if they hear of this!

Too late they already have, besides, I don’t hear you telling me to stop Ellie...

Because you know that I can’t you bastard! I’m completely unable to move, I can’t even speak, hell I can’t even make a sound!

*Is that so?* Vladimir changed his angle slightly, supporting the younger elf against the wall with his arms and one of his legs, letting Elourhay’s arms drop to land over his shoulders now that the elf was incapable of resisting. The movement caused a small groan to escape those thin elven lips.

*Well listen to that, you made a sound.* Vlad thought with a chuckle. *Didn’t I tell you it feels good? I’ve never had lunch complain yet, and wandering around in the daytime makes me oh so thirsty...*

*Bastard...* Elourhay retorted, his thoughts becoming blurry as he lost more and more blood to the thirsty vampire.

Hmmm, I sense a first year girl watching us, what must we look like hey Ellie? Let’s hope she gets the wrong idea, I love a bit of juicy gossip...

Stop I... you... stupid...

Elourhay's eyes fluttered briefly before closing. Any muscle tone he still held left his body completely as he fell unconscious into his captor's arms.

"Really Ellie?" sighed Vlad as he scooped Elourhay up princess style. "I'm disappointed in you. Couldn't you have lasted just a little longer for me? Typical, just when I'm enjoying myself he collapses of blood loss... Bloody elves."

Elourhay woke to find himself back in his own bed, a very worried looking John hovering over him with a rather bloodstained piece of cloth in his hands.

"Hey..." Elourhay muttered, pulling the best smile he could manage despite the pounding headache that had appeared and was now growing steadily worse.

"Don't talk." Pleaded John, his expression practically one of panic. "I managed to stop the bleeding, but you shouldn't move right now." He scrunched the cloth, biting his lip to stop himself from saying anything further. Elourhay could see the anger boiling behind those sapphire eyes... Eventually John couldn't hold it in anymore. "THAT BITCH! She wouldn't treat you even though we both practically begged her. VLADIMIR OF KELPIE BEGGED FOR GOD'S SAKE!" tears began to roll down his cheeks as he rinsed the cloth out in a bowl, bringing it gently to Elourhay's wounded neck. "The stupid cow...Vlad was kneeling on the floor in the corridor outside her office trying to make you comfortable and stop the bleeding. When I went in to complain she just said that she 'doesn't have the time to treat marijuana smoking tree huggers' and she said that if you were 'so stoned that a spell blew up in your face' it was your fault."

"It's ok John... she hates elves I've always known that..."

"IT'S NOT OK!" John wailed. "What if you had died?"

"Not likely from an overpowered stunning spell that was aimed away from me. Death by vampire though, that could very well have happened. I can't believe Vlad was so STUPID! Urggh." Elourhay groaned as his head gave a particularly nasty thump.

"Easy, have some water." John soothed, helping his friend to sit up a little so he could drink. "What do you mean death by... oh my God..." he gasped as he closely inspected Elourhay's neck. Two small puncture wounds, tiny enough to be overlooked given the amount of blood staining earlier, but still there... "HE BIT YOU?"

"You didn't know?"

"He said a spell went wrong and injured a few people... I thought nothing of it considering I passed some other prefects leaving with bandages and such. I just went straight to the doctor to see if you were all right and there he was. I didn't think he would lie about something like that!"

“This is Vlad we’re talking about here remember. Lying is his talent.” Elourhay sighed.

“But if he was the one who bit you, why was he trying so hard to help you? It doesn’t make sense.” John protested.

Elourhay couldn’t really reply to that one. Why did he help him? It may have simply been that he didn’t want to get expelled for killing another student. Perhaps he even pitied the dire situation Elourhay was now in?

He pulled the blankets up to his chest and huddled into a ball, resting his head on his knees. What was he going to do? His breathing became faster and his heart began to pound relentlessly in his chest. *Don’t panic now* he told himself. *You need to think this through calmly.* Hot tears began to fall afresh, re-staining the tracks that had barely dried from earlier.

“Elourhay are you alright?” John asked, gently rubbing the elf’s back trying to soothe him. His touch only made Elourhay sob harder. “Shush, calm down. Is it about Vlad? It’s alright, a vampire’s bite affects people in strange ways, whatever you felt it was just the vampire’s magic to stop you moving that’s all. Can you hear me?”

*Of course I can.* Elourhay thought. *It’s not Vlad, but how can I say... I... I’m going to die!* His sobs became anguished wails as he curled even tighter, as if to shut the entire world out. *I... can’t. How am I going to tell Windsong? Mother... father...*

“Oh hell...” muttered John. He had studied other races enough to know that survivors of a vampire bite could look upon the pleasurable sensation with guilt, some even considering it a form of sexual assault... this was way out of his league.

He picked up a rectangular tablet from its bracket on the wall, tracing his finger over the surface, highlighting the symbols in a specific pattern. The tablet shimmered, an image of an elven woman’s face appearing, still at first but it then began to move as the spell strengthened.

“Oh it’s John.” She smiled, brushing her golden blonde hair out of her eyes, the bouncy curls refusing to stay where their owner dictated. “Lessons haven’t even started and already you’re worrying about your roommate again. Is he not eating?”

“I think you better handle this one... just look...” John whispered, turning the tablet so that it faced the sobbing elf.

With a loud popping noise the woman on the other end of the tablet appeared next to John, her arm waving away the smoke that accompanied the transportation. Immediately she grabbed John’s shoulders, pulling him to face her.

“What happened? Quickly tell me, oh the poor love, we have to calm him down

before the stress starts messing with his heart rhythm.”

“From what I heard he had a rough time in the prefect meeting, and then he got bitten by a vampire...”

“Oh great goddess... It’s alright, professor Salix is here for you sweetheart.” She crooned, offering Elourhay a calming draught. She smiled when he accepted it and downed it in one go. “That’s it, calm yourself down, things aren’t as bad as they look are they?”

Elourhay put his head on his knees again, hiding his face but his sobs were replaced with heavy breathing, which was at least some improvement. He could feel the calming draught slowly neutralising all of the stress signals in his body reducing his panic and clearing his mind.

*This is a different formulation to last time* he mused, remembering when he needed calming down after a rather traumatic history lesson on some war (the video that was shown reminding Elourhay of a terrifying incident when orcs stormed his home when he was little). *It’s stronger yet I don’t feel drowsy at all.*

“A new mix?” He whispered, half expecting not to be heard.

“Yes dear, you’re very perceptive as always. I found that adding a dash of unicorn’s urine really reduces the side effects, allowing me to make a much stronger potion.”

“Ewww!” Squirmed John. “You put unicorn pee in things you have to drink?”

“Of course!” the professor beamed. “It’s not as effective as unicorn horn at neutralising poisons and other nasties but it’s much more readily available. Unicorn’s horns are what they use to channel their power you know, so not many are willing to have them cut off, even if they do grow back in a year or so...”

“I’m just glad I didn’t take medicinal potions this year.” John muttered, he shuddered as he thought about what could be in the magical remedies he had consumed over the years...

*Unicorn’s urine... I wonder if it can neutralise other things?* Elourhay thought, a hopeful optimism welling inside him. *If I just make the remedy for the symptoms stronger without the negative effects, maybe...*

He pulled a notepad out of his bedside drawer and began to scribble notes. He would need the following ingredients... could he get some unicorns urine from Cedric if he asked nicely enough (that kind of ingredient only being stocked in specialist stores, and why pay if you can get it for free)?

“He’s working?! He just had a freak-out and he’s WORKING!?” John whined. His roommate really was the limit...



“If you don’t mind professor, as I am taking medicinal potions as part of my degree, could you explain to me how that works, only I’ve never heard of this effect before and it’s really interested me?”

Elourhay smiled politely as the older elf began her explanation, diligently taking notes the whole time. *If this works, he thought hopefully, I have a plan...*

**TITLE: GODSMEN**

**AUTHOR: MATTHEW CARTER**

*Light... light and noise and blurred shapes...* That was just about the extent Sonja could perceive of the world around her as her groggy mind gradually drifted in and out of consciousness. Her brain was still a chaotic fuzz of images and memories, dreams whirring around her mind as she tried to make sense of the horrors that had occurred... *When?* Hours, days, weeks ago? Time had little meaning as she lay in her stupor, re-living her last actions before someone had struck her on the back of the head: an ordinary day shattered by a wall of flame; the screams and chatter of gunfire drowning out the cries of those they were aimed at; monsters, hulking and brutal, murdering any they came across and the immaculate man in the peaked cap who shot Jane. The shock, confusion and fear still ricocheted through her skull as the nightmare endless played out inside her head like a distorted film reel.

Andrew lying in his own blood eclipsed all other memories in destructive power. The image had burned itself into her neurones, never to be forgotten. Each and every second of the scene was painfully recorded in agonising clarity, from his lips brushing her cheek to his prone body hitting the floor. Always her cries of warning were muted, her screams silent as her world completely unravelled around her. The more she dreamed, the more vivid, and yet the more surreal, it became; almost as if it was a bad dream, an irrational concoction of fear and impossibility that she would eventually wake up from in her own bed, in her own home, Andrew asleep next to her and the traffic that they always complained about rumbling past. God, what she would have given to hear that traffic again. God, what she would have given to place her arms around Andrew one more time.

The half-thoughts began to dissolve as the white that signalled another lapse into consciousness gripped her and the subconscious of her mind braced herself for the cacophony that would assault the dull haze of her senses. Finally, her eyes opened, slits at first, blinking rapidly, before gradually the pupils dilated to ease her forgotten sight into its old functions. Eventually, the mass of blinding colour cleared to give a world clarity and meaning. Well, she could at least understand what she was looking at; or rather, everything was no-longer a blurry mess.

Men in peaked caps, that was what first struck her, though by now, the nightmares of her mind calmed her fears, or at least her pummelling heart did not beat its bloody way out of her ribcage. For minutes, her eyes drunk the room and its occupants, who were oblivious to her awakening. It was a bizarre atmosphere, the room felt like a hospital ward, yet she was the only patient, the strange, rounded cuboid that served as her bed deceptively comfortable for an object made of tan metal and rippled with angular fissures. Her brain dully registered several tubes that poked from various areas

of her body, the thickest snaking their way out of her wrist, shin, shoulder and hip up towards various phials of differing size and colour suspended via drip feeds, or other, unknown ways.

A quick glance upwards showed a series of translucent screens, paper-thin and humming softly as they were projected from the small port built into the side of her 'bed'. Though she could not begin to read the text that flickered and changed every few seconds, she guessed it was information about her. Her mind was growing sharper and more accustomed to her surroundings, so she could link the flashing icons and rapidly drawn graphs to the rhythms of her own heart and lungs. Finally, she turned away, the babble of intelligible convocation peaked her cautious interest.

The rest of the people conversed in an odd language that she had only heard from the one she first saw with those monsters back in the devastated city of New Baldon, a strange mix of guttural notes woven amongst more lyrical tones to produce an almost sing-song sound that oscillated from high to low as they spoke. Unlike her previous encounter though, the figures seemed in high spirits, jovial even, and drank what Sonja could only describe as deep, amber, champagne in tall, stemmed glasses, which they took from silver trays that seemed to float on their own accord. Their stances screamed military, something that she had grown used to from seeing Andrew and his colleges in the Militia on parade; even when on leave he would still stand ram-rod straight and for at least a week after active duty ended, something she would always tease him about. She quickly buried the memory as soon as it surfaced. It was too painful to remember just now. Better to concentrate on the world around her than think of the things she had lost.

Most of the group were dressed in the same light blue, double-breasted tunics she had seen before, with beautiful embroidery on the cuffs and collars. Red and gold piping adorned the jackets and large, baggy trousers, which may have been breeches. To Sonja, the uniform seemed archaic, as if the wearers should be armed with muskets and horses, and entirely at odds with the minimalism of the room. Yet the more she looked, the more superficial the historical resemblance became, despite the sashes, medals and leather holsters that seemed impractical and gaudy.

As she motionlessly watched the scene around her unfold, Sonja could feel strength slowly bleed into her limbs. The wake-up process had been long and drawn out and her brain was too busy slowly filtering away the grogginess of sleep to spare any energy for the rest of her body. But now her mind could think clearly and she could finally assess the function of slowly easing her muscles to move at her command. Starting small, she pooled the energy in her hands to try and curl her delicate fingers into fists.

Nothing happened.

Un-phased, she tried again, her brow furrowed in concentration, yet still her fingers remained unmoving. Panic shot through her stomach like a knife. Her heart-rate quickened every second as it suddenly dawned on her that she could not move her arms

or her legs. It was a terrifying sensation; her nerves seemed to work, but her body felt slightly numb, the sense of feeling dulled but still good enough for her to have not noticed that anything was wrong when she first awoke. Still her limbs refused to move, despite her neurones screaming commands down their synapses; her arms and legs still lying limp. As the paralysis continued, Sonja tried everything: every muscle, every joint and reflex. Still her body stayed still. In her desperate fight for mobility, the only action she managed to achieve was thrashing her head from side to side, her neck and face muscles the only ones that she seemed to have any semblance of control over.

However, her first, vain attempt at movement had not gone unnoticed, the moment the electrical signals coursed down her neurones, the holographic screens showing her life signs had flashed red, a droning claxon blaring out from the port on her bed. At once the room was thrown into disarray, at least one glass shattered on the floor as its owner dropped it in surprise. Once the initial shock was over, several identical figures pushed their way through the startled crowd and swarmed to the bed from which Sonja was now frantically fighting to escape. They were different from the others, with long white lab coats, double-breasted and packed with pockets and satchels, which suggested that they were possibly doctors or scientists. Their faces were masked, wearing some sort of black hood with great, orange lenses and a small disk pitted with holes where the mouth should have been. It gave them an insect-like appearance and an anonymity that made them frightening.

Roughly, one of them grasped her squirming head, before silently turning to one of its comrades. As the men set about seeing to the holographic screens and deactivating the still-booming klaxon, Sonja tried her best to scream, shout, do anything to communicate; but much like the test of her body, she didn't have control, only managing to slightly move her lips, and even that took great effort. A slight crawling sensation was all she felt of the immense needle being shoved into her neck. However, its other effects were felt immediately, the room already dissolving away in drifting wisps of colour and sound. Finally, her willpower could no longer hold out against whatever drugs were now causing through her veins and she was once again plunged into the repetitive dreams of her mind.



## **TITLE: I REALLY NEED A NEW START**

**AUTHOR: HARIS CHOUDHERY**

The door opened unwillingly as I barged it with open with my shoulder, revealing inside an unmade bed, and a slightly rotting kitchen unit adjacent to it. "Welcome to your new home Max, enjoy your stay" it called out to me. This place was a shithole but as far as cheap flats in a southern American country go, I had no right to complain. I could have been out on the streets with all those other poor bastards with nothing but bridges and door-stoops for shelter.

I walked over to the fridge and the over powering smell of stale blood caught me off guard. Just what was I going to find in there? A severed head? Was some poor junkie who got caught stealing from his supplier now in pieces next to the butter? I opened the door tentatively, there was nothing in there but a bottle of stale milk. A drop of water fell on the back of my hunched over neck and as I rubbed it off I saw dark scarlet on my hands. There was the source of smell, above me was a damp brown stain that had not dried in the humidity. Someone had spent their last remaining moments on earth exactly where I stood and put a gun in their mouth and pulled the trigger.

Maybe it was a sign, maybe this was fate delivering a not so subtle hint that I should end it now. Maybe I would see my dead wife and daughter again. Maybe I would see Mona again. Why hadn't the easy way come already? I had been in more fire fights than I could remember and yet each time I had put a bullet in them before they could do the same to me. I guess that's why I was recruited by Pasos to become a body guard. I was the unwillingly invincible knight in rusting armour who, despite all efforts, could not be killed. I have become a walking, talking meat shield that rich people can trust to have thrown across them to take the bullets and knives that I was all too willing to receive.

I moved over to the bed and started unpacking my suitcase, thankfully there wasn't any bodies or blood in the wardrobe. I was a mess, I had been popping pain killers for years now, I had practically inhaled two bottles of scotch every day and my skin may as well have been leather spread tightly over my muscles. Decades of smoking hadn't made any impact whatsoever, if I was going to ever get killed it wasn't going to be thanks to emphysema.

This place, well this place was definitely not New Jersey that was for sure, the sun, sand and carnivals are a far cry from the long bitterly cold darkness that surrounded me back there. Gangs here were even deadlier than the idiots back home, kids with no shoes were shooting each other over just enough money to feed themselves, not just because they wanted to be rappers. Those who had made a living selling drugs guarded their business with an almost German efficiency. Pasos told me about an old friend who he knew that was stabbed to death on a bus for stealing from his boss. He stole an ounce of Colombia's finest and was cut into pieces by machetes along with everyone else on that

bus, all in the name of sending a message to other would be thieves.

I moved over to the table by the fridge, the chair groaned under my weight but didn't break under me. There was a bottle of my favourite poison "Kong" on the table from Pasos and a dirty glass lying on its side next to it. Under the bottle was a note that read "Life is worth living Max". Sure it is pal, I remember thinking sarcastically and I opened the lid and poured out a healthy measure of the scotch.

Pasos had told me he was a cop too once upon a time and in a way everyone was an ex something in this business. Ex-cops, ex-army and we were all ex-good guys. I had been scratching around from bar to bar for years before Pasos found me and had given me what he called a second chance. A chance at what I still don't know, I've learned that there are two types of people in the world: those that build a future and those that try to rebuild the past. I had spent so much time doing the latter that I didn't even know what year it was. The idea that I could still do "some good on the streets" struck me as laughable, I had lost family on the streets, more than once. All the medals and honors in the world meant shit to me, only the next drink held any appeal and my next dose of Vicodin was all I looked forward to any more.

This gig that Pasos had set us up with involved protecting a senator named Juarez. He was a decent man from what I could tell, he built things. Had awards given to him and wasn't a bad boss I guess. I was on my fifth glass when I stumbled over to my suitcase to get the thing I had spent an hour deciding whether I was going to take or not. My last remaining picture of my wife. I had now spent more years mourning her than I had married to her. When I remember this I want to get my hands on god and show him exactly what it feels like. Pasos was a believer but that was due to his upbringing, everyone in South America was a catholic. I know God exists because he's been laughing at my drunk ass stumbling around and shooting people, all the while trying to find salvation. Every time I got close to solace and something like redemption it was ripped away from me and I was stabbed in the back. Thanks for playing, better luck next time Max.

It was right around then that I passed out. This was my vacation period before I started my job, if had known what was to come... I would have jumped into the Atlantic Ocean and swam all the way back to New York.

**TITLE: GREETINGS, TRAVELLER.**

**AUTHOR: JAMES GIBSON**

Greetings, traveller.

I'm Garth Marenghi. I imagine you've heard of one of my pants-wettingly terrifying books. You may even have experienced one for yourself, either in the original hardback format, as Jesus intended, or one of the increasingly popular audiobooks that are on sale over Amazon for a very reasonable price, considering what you get.

I think it's unquestionable that you, at some point, will have had your life altered, metamorphosed, or even, dare I say it, *transmogrified* by my works, especially if you lived in Peru at any point in the 1980s, where my televisual spectacular *Garth Marenghi's Darkplace* took the airwaves by storm, gaining more viewers than the next highest competitor, and which has recently been unleashed upon the Great British public.

Irregardless, when my accountant informed me that my earnings over the coming year would barely be able to cover the payments on my exorbitantly up to date HDDVD collection, I was more than a little shocked. But, like any good Christian, I gritted my teeth and set to work fixing the problem. My publishers pleaded with me not to do it.

"There 's no market for horror anymore, Garth!", they said, "People have been desensitised by things like Saw and Grand Theft Auto!". Once I'd set them right about the correct term for motor vehicle theft in all United Kingdom jurisdictions (it's Motor Vehicle Theft, as an aside) I sat them down and span them a tale so terrifying, so blood-chilling, so gosh-darned spooky, they were forced to reconsider.

Here then, is an extract of that tale, shared with the Society that first taught me to creep, for the one year I spent studying Sociology at the University of Nottingham. Perhaps more importantly, they taught me that, no matter how much they tell you that you can't write, they can't ever stop you.

I hope you DON'T enjoy...

Goo. Slimy, slightly sticky goo.

Goo. A luminous orange, it seemed to crawl along the shower room floor, almost but not entirely like blood. The goo was warm, the warmth of a summer day, but far more insidious than that. In between the cracks in the tiling it ran, slowly gathering momentum like a rolling stone gathers moss.

Goo. Sarah didn't see it coming as she soaped her curvaceous body. It had been a long day, and her workout at the gym had been satisfying, but had ultimately left her sweaty. As she lathered her hair, the goo moved ever closer. She looked down at the touch of it on her foot - What was that? She shrieked like a harpy as she was taken aback. She couldn't believe her eyes. The goo was forming words!

*Excuse me...* it scribed.

She was shocked. She stared, open-mouthed, as the goo moved down the plug-hole. She was so busy looking at the reforming marvel, that she didn't notice the man stab her from behind.

The blood joined the goo running along the shower-room floor. Deforming the words, revealing their true identity

*Execute me...*



# Afterword

Thank you all for putting up with this late edition! Also, big thanks to those who submitted things to this edition :)

Next edition will be released during Christmas (preferably on Christmas day). So if you want to submit stuff, do it now :D

